



Participants of the Better Opportunity for Single Servicemembers program at USAG Livorno, Italy, carry boardwalk on the American Beach in Tirrenia, Italy. (Army photo)

BOSS program puts Soldiers in charge

LIVORNO, Italy – A week of studying budgeting, advertising, marketing, and the difference between appropriated and nonappropriated funds is not your average training for young Soldiers.

But for members of Better Opportunity for Single Servicemembers, such knowledge is critical in improving their installation BOSS programs in Italy.

And support for the instruction starts at the top.

“We need to ensure our BOSS members are qualified and given proper training,” said U.S. Army Garrison Livorno’s Command Sgt. Maj. William Berrios, as he and USAG Vicenza’s Command Sgt. Maj. Keith Filipp decided on how to train as many Soldiers possible in the smartest way financially.

After blocks of morning classroom instructions, the troops put their training into afternoon practice.

“I had no idea that I would be helping lay down matting and cleaning up the pool” said Sgt. Adam Villareal, USAG Vicenza BOSS vice president. “But this actually helps me practice what we learned on organizing volunteer events.”

Not only did BOSS members help with the community pool, they also saved the government thousands of dollars by making repairs at the American Beach in nearby Tirrenia.

“It’s hard work laying down boardwalk,” said Sgt. Wanita Wilson, USAG Livorno Headquarters and Headquarters Company. “But whenever my friends and I visit the beach, I’ll look at it and know that with my sweat and blood, I helped put this together. And that’s cool.”

While volunteering is a major pillar of BOSS, it’s not all that the program offers.

“Going to a BOSS meeting is kind of like a community action council for single servicemembers” said Mike Ftacek, Vicenza morale, welfare and recreation advisor. “BOSS meetings offer a great venue for getting problems solved and getting assistance from peers and senior BOSS advisors.”

Ftacek believes that while the one week of training enlightens program managers, it is support from Army leaders that is even more critical in helping BOSS execute community events, ensuring troops attend BOSS meetings and highlighting how an active program benefits the entire community.

And that means communities downrange as well.

“I’ve given this class to soldiers who deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan and started their own programs.” said Joanne Geer, Installation Management Command-Europe regional program manager for BOSS. “That really touched my heart to see them do it on their own, when they didn’t have to.”

By Staff Sgt. Joyce Costello; USAG Livorno Public Affairs